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New Homeland Security Operations Center Connects all 50 States and Major Urban Areas

The Department of Homeland Security has created a new state-of-the-art Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC) to serve as the primary, national-level nerve center for real-time threat monitoring, domestic incident management, and vertical and horizontal information sharing efforts. Operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, the HSOC provides situational awareness and monitoring of the homeland, coordinates incidents and response activities, and issues advisories and bulletins to homeland security partners as well as specific protective and counter measure guidance.

"This Administration is committed to information sharing, it is essential to keeping our nation safe and secure," said Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge. "The Homeland Security Operations Center synthesizes vital threat related information and strengthens coordination and communication among numerous agencies and homeland security partners."

As a single point of information integration, the HSOC maintains daily situational awareness on the security of our homeland and coordinates activities with other departments and agencies. Today, the HSOC is operational in an expanded watch floor with updated and integrated technology. The cornerstone of the HSOC is its ability to share threat information and provide real-time interactive connectivity with Governors, Homeland Security Advisors, law enforcement partners and critical infrastructure

operators in all 50 States and more than 50 major urban areas through the Homeland Security Information Network. The HSIN system was launched on February 25 of this year with all states receiving connectivity, ahead of schedule, by July 2004.

As part of the initial National Response Plan, the Secretary of Homeland Security is responsible for coordinating Federal operations within the United States to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies. The HSOC serves as a valuable conduit providing ongoing situational awareness to the Secretary as well as the White House.

Accommodating more than 35 agency representatives ranging from law enforcement organizations to federal departments, the HSOC serves as a clearinghouse for vital information to determine possibilities of risk or terrorist nexus and shares that information with appropriate officials to strengthen and coordinate security operations where necessary. The HSOC also utilizes mapping and graphical aids to help translate information and determine if additional protective measures are necessary.

From the Program Coordinator's Desk by Gary Zulinski

"Michigan Citizen Corps Turns 40"

I am proud to announce that the fortieth council has been registered. Brighton Area Citizen Corps Council recently registered as a council and it includes the City of Brighton, Genoa Township and Brighton Township. Lt Mike Kennedy is the POC for the Brighton Area Citizen Corps Council.

I recently visited the Denton Township and Gerrish Township Councils. I attended the Gerrish Township CERT class, conducted by John Bawol, Emergency Manager for Roscommon County. The Police Chief participated and the class was very enthusiastic and

excited about the training. It was very enjoyable to meet with the group and answer some of their questions. It inspires me to see this enthusiasm from a diverse group of citizens concerned about their community and the steps they will take to help improve the living conditions of the community.

The Train the Trainer course is taking the summer off and the next class is scheduled for Sept 16th, and 17th at Oakland Community College, CREST Center. Watch the web site for the announcement.

The 2003 CERT grant contracts have been sent out and many communities are already implementing the training and scheduling classes. I will be sending out the reimbursement forms so those grantees can begin submitting their reimbursements.

It has been an enormous task to grant out 3 years worth of funding (1.5 million dollars) to 52 grantees in less than a six- month period. Circumstances have caused the process to be slow then hurried, but the results are showing promise and the benefits to the communities are worth the effort.

I will be attending the National Citizen Corps Conference in Denver the week of July 26th. Last years conference in Washington DC was very informative and a great way to network with the rest of the country. I will report on the conference in the August E-Bulletin.

I continue to receive information concerning CERT equipment. I recently received information from Mine Safety Appliances (MSA). They sent me the V-Guard protective cap with the CERT logo. They come in the traditional lime green and Hi Viz orange. Visit MAS at www.MSAnet.com.

Ellis and Liberty Islands' Employees Receive CERT Training

In preparation for the re-opening of the Statue of Liberty this summer and as a salute to Flag Day, the National Park Service (NPS) and the Department of Homeland Security have partnered to provide Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training for a group of 50 Ellis and Liberty Islands'

NPS employees, partners and concession staff. To complete their training in all-hazard preparedness, today, these employees participated in disaster simulation exercises in fire extinction, medical triage and treatment, and victim extrication.

"Ensuring the safety of all employees and visitors is our number one priority," said Fran P. Mainella, National Park Service director. "Offering all-hazards training for employees, as well as emergency response information and safety techniques for our visitors, contributes to our goal of offering the best educational experience possible. The program here at the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island can serve as a model for the rest of the National Park System."

CERT is a component of Citizen Corps, the Department of Homeland Security's grass roots initiative that encourages everyone to play a role in hometown security - through personal preparedness, training, and volunteer programs. C. Suzanne Mencer, the Department of Homeland Security's Director of the Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness added, "The Department of Homeland Security is committed to engaging all citizens, either at work or at home, in getting prepared and involved in hometown security. Partnering with the National Park Service will provide opportunities for employees and visitors alike to learn more about how they can make a difference in making our communities safer."

Once trained, CERT prepared citizens can assist others by applying basic emergency response and organizational skills to stabilize a situation. CERT is a positive and realistic approach to emergency and disaster situations where citizens and their actions can make a difference.

Today's training and recognition ceremony are part of a three-day emergency preparedness educational program occurring at Ellis Island in observance of Flag Day. In addition to the training, several Citizen Corps affiliates including the American Red Cross - Greater New York, Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Fire Protection Association New York City Fire Department - Fire Safety Education Fund, Medical Reserve Corps - Dutchess County, NY, Medical Reserve Corps - Middlesex County, NJ, New York State Special Volunteer Programs and the American Radio Relay League will display information kiosks for visitors to learn more

about all hazards preparedness, training, and volunteer opportunities. With 1,200 local Citizen Corps Councils nationwide, visitors to the island will also learn how they can get involved with local activities when they return home.

Added Mencer, "On Flag Day, we reflect on what it means to live in America. We encourage all citizens of America to pledge their personal commitment to take an active role in hometown safety." Other cities conducting Flag Day Citizen Corps activities include, Washington, DC, Harris County, TX, Fresno, CA, Tulsa, OK, and Belvidere, IL.

The Ellis Island training was made possible through collaborative efforts of New York City's Office of Emergency Management, the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management/New Jersey State Police, area Citizen Corps Councils, American Red Cross in Greater New York, and the Regional Office of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. For more information, visit www.nps.gov.

Homeland Security Leverages NOAA All-Hazards Network

June 17, 2004--Homeland Security's Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection Directorate and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce signed an agreement allowing Homeland Security to send critical all-hazards alerts and warnings directly through the NOAA All-Hazards Network. The Network supplements existing alert and warning resources and is an additional means for sending life-saving information nationally, regionally or locally.

Under this agreement, Homeland Security now has the authority to develop an alert and warning message that can be delivered directly to NOAA and broadcast to affected areas. The system is capable of reaching over 97 percent of the United States territory on a 24/7 basis through broadcasts in 50 states, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and Saipan.

Task Force on State and Local Homeland Security Funding Delivers Recommendations

June 17, 2004 – The Task Force on State and Local Homeland Security Funding delivered their report with findings and recommendations for expediting the flow of homeland security funds to ensure that our nation's emergency managers, first responders and law enforcement officials quickly get the federal funds they need.

The report underscores that no one issue or level of government has been responsible for the delays, but that there are several independent issues. This includes everything from procurement rules to backlogs of equipment orders from private sector homeland security vendors. The report also outlines a number of innovative best practices that some jurisdictions use to support the procurement and delivery of emergency response equipment. See the following for the full report.

<http://www.dhs.gov/interweb/assetlibrary/HSAC-FundingTaskForceRpt0604-FINAL.pdf>

SNOW SAYS TERROR THREAT HANGS OVER THE U.S. ECONOMY

CLEVELAND (Reuters) - The government's ability to stop the flow of cash to terror groups is essential for protection of the U.S. economy from threats of terror attacks, U.S. Treasury Secretary John Snow said on Tuesday.

"Hatred fuels the terrorist agenda, cash makes it possible," he said at a local film-coating plant. "The work to track and shut down the financial network of terror is, therefore, one of the most critical jobs of our government today."

The Treasury chief's remarks were part of the Bush administration's push to win support for the controversial Patriot Act among voters uneasy about the war in Iraq and about provisions of the 2001 law that gave the government broad new investigative powers.

In a local radio interview, Snow said any effort to water down the Patriot Act would be "a disaster" for efforts to hamper terror groups' ability to move money, declaring "there is no more serious threat to our economy than the threat of terrorist attacks on our soil."

The Bush administration last week narrowly beat back an effort in the U.S. House of Representatives to soften the law by limiting federal monitoring of library records and bookshop orders. Even the possibility of a terror attack creates uncertainty, although it is difficult to quantify the impact on the economy, Snow said.

"It's in the back of peoples' minds that a terror attack can't be totally discarded. That creates an element of uncertainty. I don't think it's taking one-tenth, two-tenths, three-tenths of GDP (gross domestic product) -- you can't quantify it but it is on peoples' minds," Snow told reporter.

'BLOOD MONEY'

Snow highlighted the Treasury's role in tracking terror finances and said the Patriot Act had helped law enforcement officials and financial services providers share information.

"These changes have enabled the government, in partnership with the financial community, to tighten the tourniquet that cuts off terrorist blood money," Snow said.

He said some \$141 million of suspicious money has been frozen since 2001 in the United States and abroad, keeping it out of terror group hands.

Some Patriot Act provisions are set to expire at the end of next year, including ones allowing intelligence agents and law enforcement authorities to share information about suspected terrorists, and expanded use of wiretaps and search warrants.

"Reauthorization of the act is one of the most important steps we can take to defeat the killers, to force them back into their tunnels and holes, starved of the resources it would take to build a bomb, pilot a plane or harness a virus," Snow said.

Michigan State Police boost homeland security efforts

The Associated Press
7/08/04

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Michigan State Police officials said Thursday they have heightened security in response to unspecified terror threats to the United States from al-Qaida.

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge warned Thursday that a steady stream of intelligence indicates al-Qaida wants to attack the United States to disrupt the upcoming elections and political conventions. Ridge asked states to increase their vigilance in response.

The Michigan State Police said there is no evidence to indicate any specific threats to the state or to suggest that Michigan is more at risk than any other state. But the state police motor carrier division has increased its presence at Canadian borders, working with customs officials.

State police posts have been told to heighten security at critical infrastructure points as part of their normal patrols. All local law enforcement agencies are requested to do the same.

Private sector companies who have security systems are being urged to review those systems and their security staffing.

"We will continue to maintain open lines of communication with our federal and local law enforcement partners to ensure the timely exchange of intelligence information," Col. Tadarius J. Sturdivant, Michigan State Police director, said in a written statement.

Has emergency management improved in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks?

Yes - and no, said experts at the 29th Annual Hazards Research and Applications Workshop on Monday.

"There has never been such a spotlight on an entire emergency management system," pointed out Bob Shea, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) official. "We are embarking on areas of collaboration at levels we've never attempted."

"And there is more money flowing to cities and counties," added Frances Edwards, emergency manager for the City of San Jose, Calif., "and there has been an increase in interagency coordination. Agencies that have ignored us before now asked how we can work together."

Edwards is correct, said Jan Benini, who serves on the White House Homeland Security Council; since the Sept. 11 attacks, the federal government has pumped \$8 billion into the first responder community. And working together at federal, state and local levels to spend that money ideally seems like a good endeavor, the experts agreed. "There has been integration of a whole lot of plans and strategies," said Bill Waugh, a Georgia State University researcher.

But unintended consequences have marred visions that seemed ideal in the days when Ground Zero was still filled with toxic dust and weary firefighters. "When the federal government moved (immediately after the terrorist attacks), it moved on an emotional level and not a rational one," said Shea. "Since then we've been driven by a level of intensity and almost insanity," said Shea.

And the insanity is driving at least some local emergency managers up a wall. "Quite honestly, this is something very difficult for local emergency managers to talk about without losing their tempers," said Edwards.

And what irritates her isn't that the federal government seems to have a "top-down approach." "I'm not negative about the idea that the federal government comes up with the idea and we will play."

For better or worse, the "idea" - DHS - is a conglomeration of what used to be 22 separate federal agencies.

With a lot of money that has been fed to state and local first responders. "And there has been a tendency to go for big-ticket items with a minimum amount of planning," admitted Waugh. "The amount of money available has had a profound effect."

For starters, it has created what Waugh and others called "a consultant culture" in which, instead of funding existing local emergency management staff,

the federal government encourages use of outside contractors. Some local responders have dubbed it "the 9/12 consultant phenomenon" since many contractors appeared to rise out of nowhere the day after the attacks.

"That mentality of being pro-contractor comes from the military," agreed Edwards, "and that's very frustrating for elected officials of cities who can't use funds to get their own staff better trained. It would be so much less expensive."

What's more, some of the contractors are selling fraudulent homeland security products with sales lines that fool even seasoned emergency managers. "I'm making an appeal for universities to evaluate technology. When someone comes forward with this wonderful anthrax detector - does it work? We need to set standards on what's good and useful."

Benini - who admitted these problems indeed existed and also admitted she was too partisan to serve as moderator for these panelists - countered that the goal is to make the country safer - no matter who does the work. "The federal government's role is to help the nation respond to a new range of hazards." And by distributing funds locally, the Bush Administration has attempted to empower communities, she argued. "That's better than people sitting in Washington and saying what toys you can buy."

But if money has been forthcoming -- how much relevant information from DHS is coming into the hazards community?

Precious little, said Waugh. "It's a source of frustration for the disaster community." Studies have been done and redone on issues such as evacuation behavior, he pointed out, and in some cases there is vast literature available on topics highly relevant to DHS's goals. "There is a whole lot of indication that in terrorism incidents, the public responds the same way they respond in natural disasters. I'm not sure homeland security people are sharing information they have. Access is not afforded. Processes are not transparent. That information is simply not available. Lack of information has been a source of great frustration. "We need to change the culture of DHS," he said, "by going with governance models we refer to as modern."

Edwards was no less frustrated. "It's a little discouraging to me that interest in emergency management has not translated into mitigation. Instead the word has become prevention, she said, and those aren't the same thing.

"If the mitigation is to build levies, then that can prevent flooding - but I come from California and earthquakes are not preventable."

But from the DHS perspective, emergency managers need to remember that hazards in the U.S. are not just natural anymore, urged Shea. "My advice is that the world we face doesn't only include natural hazards. We're anxious to figure out what makes sense."

And Belini shook her head and laughed: "I think we get nostalgic about the days we didn't have money."

For more information about Michigan Citizen Corps, contact the Program Coordinator, Gary Zulinski at (517) 241-3867 or zulinskig@michigan.gov.

***We all have a role
in Hometown Security***

**Citizen Corps asks you to embrace the personal responsibility to be prepared;
to get training in first aid and emergency skills;
and to volunteer to support local emergency responders, disaster relief, and community safety**